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TWO NOTES ON MEDIÆVAL SERBIAN HISTORY

I. THE DATE OF THE FRESCO IN THE CHURCH AT SOPOČANI

ON the northern wall of Holy Trinity Church at Sopočani there is a large composition representing the death of Queen Ana, wife of Stefan the First-crowned and mother of King Uroš. In the foreground one can see King Uroš, dressed in white as a sign of mourning and with hands lifted and head bowed to his dead mother. Around the Queen's death-bed there are the figures of three children. They are the children of King Uroš and Queen Helena: Dragutin, Milutin and their sister Brnjača or Brnča. V. Petković has mistaken this girl for Dragutin.¹

Describing the fresco at Sopočani, V. Petković writes that Uroš was represented as a man of between fifty and sixty years old, that Dragutin "could be 14 or 15 years old," and Milutin eleven or twelve.

It is generally accepted that Uroš married Helena about 1250.² Therefore Dragutin would be fifteen in 1264/5. This would be the date of the death of Queen Ana and also the date of the fresco at Sopočani.

Petković adduces another detail in order to determine the chronology. The body of King Stefan the First-crowned was kept for 152 years at Sopočani. Then it was reburied for 211 years. Patriarch Pajsije disinterred the King's body (1629) and put it in the church again. Since Ana was already buried at Sopočani, King Uroš transferred his father's body to the same place. The detailed knowledge which we possess about King Stefan's body indicates that it was in 1266 that this transference took place. Petković takes this as another indication that Queen Ana died in 1264 or 1265. We do not know whether the body of King Stefan the First-crowned was ever at Sopočani.³ It is nowhere stated that a year or two after Ana's death the transference of her husband's body took place.

The fresco of the death of Queen Ana in Holy Trinity Church at Sopočani, "at the source of the river Raška," is a very important document: it can give us chronological details which will help not only to fix the date of the painting itself, but also the date of the death of Queen Ana. The work of painting the church was almost complete when Ana died. The news of her death came while the painters were at work at

¹ Vlad. R. Petković, "La mort de la reine Anne à Sopočani. L'art byzantin chez les Slaves. Les Balkans" (*Recueil dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij*, II, 1930, pp. 218-21).

² Konstantin Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben I* (1911), p. 318; N. L. Okunev, "Sostav rospisi khrama v Sopochanakh" (*Byzantinoslavica I*, 1929, p. 130); L. Mirković, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih od arhiep. Danila* (Edition of the Serbian Literary Society, vol. 257, 1935, p. 10).

³ St. Stanojević, "Mošti Stevana Prvovenčanog u Vojvodini" (*Glasnik Istoriskog društva u Novom Sadu III*, 1930, pp. 50-52).

Sopoćani. There was still space on the church wall for perpetuating the memory of the death of the founder's beloved mother, and accordingly it was used for this purpose. Similar instances of recording a death in an uncompleted fresco occur in later years. For example in the church at Arilje (1296) there was a picture representing the death of Merkurije, Bishop of Moravice,¹ and in the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady at Gračanica another representing the death of Bishop Todor (1315).²

The evidence which we have from other documents and which has been hitherto neglected is against the conclusion that Ana died in 1264 and that Sopoćani was painted in 1265.

It is true that Dragutin in the Sopoćani fresco appears to be no more than fourteen years old. Milutin is, of course, younger. But Dragutin could not have been fourteen in 1264 or 1265. In 1268 Dragutin was already married. After the Serbo-Hungarian war in Mačva, peace was concluded in 1268. This peace stipulated certain rights for Dragutin.³ At the time of his marriage Dragutin was undoubtedly more than thirteen or fourteen years old. Neither was Dragutin's younger brother Milutin fifteen years old at the time of the negotiation for his marriage in 1268.⁴

We know that at the time when Dragutin married he was already a youth (*junoša*).⁵ He was older than eighteen. For Dragutin's age we have evidence from Domentijan, a monk of Mount Athos. In the tower of the Transfiguration at Chilandar, Domentijan wrote in 1264 the biography of St. Simeon, the former Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja. He says that at that time the fourth generation of Nemanja's descendants had reached military age.⁶ In this biography of the founder of the House of Nemanjić, Domentijan is alluding to Dragutin when he mentions "the fourth generation," which at that time was old enough "to ride a horse and to carry a warrior's lance." At that time (1264) Dragutin came of age and became capable of bearing arms. He was, therefore, twenty years old.

If Dragutin was twenty in 1264, then he must have been fourteen in 1258. This means that Queen Ana, whose death was represented at Sopoćani, died at that time,⁷ and that it was in 1258 that the painting at Sopoćani was finished.

The conclusions of this investigation therefore are (1) that Sopoćani

¹ N. L. Okunev, *op. cit.*, p. 132; N. L. Okunev, "Arilje" (*Seminarium Kondakovianum* VIII, 1936, p. 223); Miodrag Al. Purković, "Srpski episkopi i mitropoliti srednjega veka" (*Hrišćansko delo*, III, 4-6. Skoplje, 1937, p. 37).

² M. Al. Purković, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ K. Jireček, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁵ Dj. Daničić, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih, napisao Danilo i drugi* (1866), p. 13.

⁶ Dj. Daničić, *Život svetoga Simeuna i svetoga Save napisao Domentijan* (1865), p. 116.

⁷ Not knowing of this fresco at Sopoćani, Ljub. Kovačević wrote in his study "Žene i deca Stefana Prvovenčanoga" (*Glas of the Serbian Royal Academy*, LX, 1901, p. 31) that Ana died about 1217. Jovan Radonić (*Slike iz istorije i književnosti*, 1930, p. 94) says that Ana died "at a very advanced age."

was painted about 1258 ; (2) that Queen Ana died about 1258 ; (3) that Milutin was born about 1248 ; (4) that Dragutin was born about 1244, and (5) that Uroš married Helena about 1243.

II. WAS STEFAN DEČANSKI THE YOUNGER OR THE ELDER OF KING MILUTIN'S SONS ?

King Milutin was married four times. By Simonida he had no children. By Helizabeth he had a daughter whose name was Carica.

When the negotiations for the marriage with Ana, daughter of the Emperor Michael VIII Palæologus, were broken off (1268), Milutin married in 1273 Helena, daughter of sebastocrator John of Thessaly. With this wife Milutin lived until 1283.¹ By 1284² he was already married to his third wife, Ana, daughter of the Bulgarian tsar, George Terteri. Milutin and Ana were divorced before 1296.³ Ana does not appear in the fresco of the church at Arilje,⁴ which was finished in 1296.⁵

We know for certain that Milutin had two sons—Stefan and Konstantin. Besides Carica, we know of Milutin's other daughter Ana, wife of a later Bulgarian tsar, Michael, the son of Šišman. By Ana, Milutin had more than one child. In the so-called *Plevaljski Trebnik* ("Plevlje Missal") the writer exclaims : "Long live Queen Ana and *her children* !"⁶

Ilarion Ruvarac thought that Konstantin was Ana's son,⁷ but Jireček considered Konstantin to be the elder son.⁸ S. Radojčić has drawn attention to Konstantin's portrait, which is in the genealogical tree of the Nemanjić dynasty in the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady at Gračanica, where Konstantin is depicted as a young man.⁹ But in spite of this Pavle Popović¹⁰ and Vladimir Ćorović¹¹ take Konstantin for Milutin's elder son. I have maintained that Konstantin was Milutin's younger son and that he was a child of Milutin's third marriage, with Ana.¹² To this conclusion I was led by the portrait of Konstantin in the genealogical tree at Gračanica. I think that Gračanica was painted in 1315 and I have given the reasons for this opinion.¹³ At Gračanica Konstantin was represented as a young man of some twenty-five years of age and not as a man of thirty-five or more.

¹ Svetozar Radojčić, *Portreti srpskih vladara u srednjem veku* (Skopje (1934), p. 27.

² Gregor Čremošnik, "Kancelariski i notariski spisi" (*Istoriski spomenici Dubrovačkog arhiva* III, 1, 1932, pp. 122, 136).

³ Miodrag Al. Purković, *Prilošci srpskoj istoriji* (*Glasnik Škopskog naučnog društva* XXI, 1940, p. 160, n. 33.

⁴ Radojčić, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁵ *Spomenik* of the Serbian Royal Academy, LXXXVII, 1938, pp. 8-9.

⁶ Ljub. Stojanović, "Trebnik manastira sv. Trojice kod Pevalja" (*Spomenik* LVI, 1922, p. 20).

⁷ Zbornik Ilariona Ruvarca I. Za štampu spremio Nikola Radojčić, 1936, p. 39.

⁸ *Archiv für slavische Philologie* XXII (1900), p. 174 ; K. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben* I, p. 341.

⁹ Radojčić, *Portreti*, p. 39.

¹⁰ *Stare srpske biografije XV i XVIII veka*. Preveo Dr. Lazar Mirković (Izd. srp. književna zadruga 265, 1936, p. xxxi).

¹¹ Vladimir Ćorović, *Historija Bosne* I (1940), p. 234.

¹² *Glasnik Škopskog naučnog društva* XXI (1940), p. 166. ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-66.

Besides the express statement by Grigorije Camblak that Stefan was Milutin's first-born son,¹ an indication of Stefan's age is given by Archbishop Danilo II. Stefan went to the Tartar Khan Nogay to "serve" him. When Stefan, together with certain noblemen, went to Nogay's court as a hostage, he was a youth (*junoša*).² He was therefore over seventeen.

We are given no date for Stefan's visit to Khan Nogay, but we can deduce it. It was not long, records Danilo, after Dragutin got Srem, when the brothers Drman and Kudelin of Braničevo began to prepare to take action against king Dragutin. Hearing of the intentions of Drman and Kudelin, king Dragutin invaded their country, but, because it was so well fortified, he was unable to achieve anything. Dragutin came back. Now Drman and Kudelin collected forces from among the Tartars and Cumans and advanced on Dragutin. Faced with this danger, Dragutin addressed himself to Milutin. At their meeting in Mačkovci Dragutin disclosed the danger to his brother and asked him for help. Soon Dragutin and Milutin in a common offensive overpowered Drman and Kudelin. Considering it an infringement of his own rights, Šišman, the prince of Vidin, attacked Milutin and penetrated deep into Serbia, as far as the approaches to Peć, but he was stopped at Ždrelo. Milutin then started a counter-offensive. Drawing back before Milutin, Šišman hardly saved himself alive by hastily crossing the Danube. After the conclusion of peace Šišman married the daughter of the Serbian grand župan, Dragoš, and shortly afterwards king Milutin gave his daughter Ana to Šišman's son Michael. The Tartar khan, Nogay, continues Danilo, moved by the devil, started to prepare forces against Milutin. A deputation from Milutin pacified Nogay, and both Milutin and Nogay declared "a great love" to each other, and Milutin gave his son Stefan "for service" to Nogay.

There is another piece of evidence given by the same Danilo. Archbishop Jevstatije I died at Žiča on 4 January 1286 and was buried there in the crypt which he had prepared for himself. When some years had passed after his death and miracles had begun to occur, the archbishop's body was taken out of the crypt and exposed in a specially prepared coffin in a visible place. And when some further time had passed, because of the war a great peril confronted Žiča. Therefore, archbishop Jakov ordered the body of archbishop Jevstatije to be transferred from Žiča to Peć.³

Jakov became Archbishop after 4 January 1286 and held office until February 1292. This means that at that time Žiča was threatened with danger. The revolt of Drman and Kudelin is to be dated 1290.⁴ The

¹ *Glasnik Društva srpske slovesnosti* XI (1859), p. 45.

² Danilo, p. 122.

³ Danilo, p. 318.

⁴ P. Nikov, "Tataro-bălgarski otnosheniya pŕez srĕdnitĕ vĕkove" (*Annals of the University of Sofia* XV-XVI, 1921, pp. 17-25); also "Istoriya na vidinskoto knyazhestvo" (*Annals of the University of Sofia* XVIII, 1922, pp. 61-63); St. Stanojević, "Srpski arhiepiskopi od Save II do Ānila II" (*Glas of the Serbian Royal Academy* CLIII, 1933, p. 63, n. 47).

expedition of Dragutin and Milutin took place the next year and Milutin's war with Šišman in either 1291 or at the beginning of 1292. After Šišman had been defeated, peace was signed and Milutin gave his daughter Ana to Šišman's son. This was in 1292. Fearing for his own rights, Khan Nogay asked for guarantees that his rights would be respected. Accordingly Milutin's son Stefan went to Nogay's court as a hostage.

Stefan therefore went to Nogay in 1292 and was at that time a youth of seventeen. He must have been born about 1275. It is perfectly clear that Stefan was a son of Milutin's first wife, the Greek Helena, and that he was the elder of Milutin's sons.

Because Milutin's daughter married in 1292 it is certain that she too was Helena's daughter. Princess Ana was born about 1277.

The conclusions of this inquiry are: (1) Stefan Dečanski was king Milutin's elder son and was born about 1275; (2) Princess Ana, wife of the Bulgarian tsar, Michael, was also a daughter of Helena and was born about 1277.

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